THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI MD. ALI ASHRAF FATMI): (a) to (d) The parameters of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) allow for grant of free text books to all girls, and all Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribe children at primary and upper primary level, within an upper ceiling of Rs. 150/- per child. The Government of Maharashtra had made a request in 2003-04 for extending the same to boys of other social categories. The State Government was informed that this benefit does not extend to any other category of children under the SSA programme.

Abuse of lower caste students

1236. SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that according to the UNESCO commission report on the Education for All (EFA) programme, higher caste teachers have physically and verbally abused lower caste students and the country will not be able to achieve the literacy goals set for the year 2015; and

(b) if so, Government's response thereto and the action proposed to be taken thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI MD. ALI ASHRAF FATMI): (a) and (b) UNESCO Global Monitoring Report, 2006, while referring to corporal punishment in schools in South Asia, has quoted such instances on the basis of a UNICEF report of 2001. The Report concludes that India is one of the countries at risk of not achieving the Dakar goal of improving adult literacy by at least 50% by 2015. However, the Government of India does not agree with this conclusion of the Report, which appears to be based on outdated data, and does not take into account recent initiatives and programmes in basic education.

Decline in gender ratio

1237. SHRI K. CHANDRAN PILLAI: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that gender ratio is still declining;

(b) whether it is also a fact that in many States including Madhya Pradesh, the gender ratio is much below the national average;